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# MASS MEDIA AND CLAUSEWITZ: A DIFFERENT LOOK AT THE TRINITY

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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#### **ABSTRACT**

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This monograph examines the controversy surrounding mass media and war by close examination of the media's influence on Carl von Clausewitz's "Remarkable Trinity" (the people, the government, and the military). After a brief historical examiniation of that controversy, a new model is developed that provides a tool for the examination of past, present, and future conflicts. Subsequent sections examine the application of this model against limited war, total war, operations other than war, and selected future scenarios. A separate section offers constructs for future military/media relations. The final section summarizes the findings.

The premise of this monograph is that Clausewitz's thoughts are very much alive and well and, that the media exerts pressures that must be considered during each phase of military conflict. All that needs to be done is to examine these issues in new ways.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about mass media and war. The controversy surrounding this issue has been a continual source of friction that is based on almost two hundred years of misconceptions, distrust, and antagonism between the press and the military. In order to render the complexities of this subject more understandable and to offer possible constructs for the future, this paper examines the friction in terms of mass media's influence on what Clauzewitz termed the "Remarkable Trinity" (the people, the government, and the military). In that context, the "will" of the people, the "polity" of the government, and, the "subordinancy" of the military are examined.

The treatise begins with a brief historical examination of the fundamental issues of the friction between the press and the military. Emphasis will be given to freedom of the press, how changes in the technology of mass media contributed to an everincreasing source of that friction, and to demystification of the media. The second section looks at a new, updated variation of the "Trinity" in terms of design and theoretical application. In addition, this new model will be evaluated against the full range of conflict from total war to operations other than war. The third section offers constructs for future military/media relations. The final section summarizes the findings.

#### THE FOG OF WAR

The underlying problem is that the military and the media hate each other because neither soldiers nor reporters understand the nature of The soldiers understand war. journalists fighting. The understand communications. Neither group knows that the political impact of combat depends on the communication of the fighting. military-media relationship Media need to see the symbiotic. action. We [the military] need for them to see it, because battle is meaningless until it is credibly communicated to the world.2

It is ironic that two entities that have worked together for almost two hundred years have not been able to sort out their differences with respect to media coverage of conflict. As aptly stated above, neither group "understands" the nature of war. Although, Carl von Clausewitz's book On War is routinely studied in the military classroom and cited, albeit infrequently, by members of the press, it is apparent that modern-day attempts to consider all the elements of the Trinity by either side are largely nonexistent. During periods of conflict, the military appears to be focused on itself and the act of "fighting" while the press appears to be focused on the people and presentation of the "whole truth" to the "folks back home."

In order to understand this dichotomy, it is necessary to examine three areas: freedom of the press, technological developments, and the nature of media. In 1778 Alexander Hamilton expounded upon the "importance of a free press in protecting the nation against the intrigues of scoundrels and traitors. "4 Fifty years later Alexis de Tocqueville "confirmed that Hamilton's vision of its role had been realized: 'It makes political life circulate in every corner of that vast land [the United States]. Its eyes are never shut, and it lays bare the secret shifts of politics, forcing public figures in turn to appear before the tribunal of public opinion.'"5 De Tocqueville might have also added that it placed the military under the microscope of both the people and the government, the other two-thirds of the Trinity. To understand the full complexity of this concept, an examination of the impact of technological development on the military-media relationship, as exemplified by press censorship, is essential.

Although "reporters" were present during the Revolutionary War, they were predominantly located in the cities and towns. At that time, news service was irregular and of questionable accuracy. Since most military conflicts occurred away from the cities, there was minimal concern by the military over the possibility of sensitive leaks. By the outbreak of the Mexican-American War in 1846, not only were newspapers being published on a daily basis, but they had sent the first war correspondents into the field. Due

to the length of time it took reporters to deliver information to their editors, the military once again had minimal concerns.

It was, however, an entirely different issue during the Civil War. General William T. Sherman, for example, was "forced to fight a battle he had hoped to avoid at Goldsboro when the Confederate general William Hardee read in the New York Tribune that that was where the Yankees were heading." Sherman's other encounters with representatives of the press, especially those of the North who went so far as to call him insane and otherwise vilify his character, led him to state "we don't want the truth told about things here....We don't want the enemy any better informed than he is."

The War Department's attempt at censorship in August 1861 met with little success due to its overly broad guidance and "uneven" application. To compound matters,

Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, generally credited with inventing the wartime communique, deliberately distorted accounts of key battles and manipulated casualty figures to present a more positive account of the Union Army's performance. When negative reports of the army's performance nonetheless were published, Stanton resorted to banning correspondents from the front, arresting editors, and suspending papers for violating censorship rules.

By its own actions the military and its civilian masters clearly failed to reach a compromise with a force that greatly influences the balance of the Trinity - the media.

From the Indian Wars of the 1870's and 1880's through today, the basic adversarial relationship between the military and the media has not differed greatly from that encountered during the Civil War. As technology evolved, in particular the advent of radio and television, so did the impact of media on the people, the government, and the military. In World War II, for the first time, the drama of war was brought to listeners in the comfort of their own living rooms. The descriptive, heart-wrenching narratives of conquest from such notable broadcasters as Walter Cronkite and Edward R. Murrow had immediate impact on their audience. reports, supplemented by newsreels shown weekly at the "movie houses," gave the American public the most complete vision of warfare available at that time. Comprehensive news was now measured in terms of hours. By the time of the Vietnam conflict (pictures, sounds, and commentary) had become instantaneous via satellite feeds of television broadcasts. As a result of instant communications, tension has increased between the military and the media. The media has the means to get large numbers of correspondents to the battlefield and to present events as they happen, but the military must protect sensitive information and provide for the safety of the reporters.

Finally, the last area that helps to shed light on the military-press relationship is simply the nature of the media. For the military, in other words, the operative question is: what drives the media? The most frequent answer by the press is their

desire to bring the truth to the people, a First Amendment argument that is firmly lodged in the American version of freedom of the press. The media wants access to the battlefield and the military wants to protect sensitive information. The dilemma is that, as one observer has commented, "freedom of the press as guaranteed by the Constitution is a particularly American concept. While the American press is not impervious to control or attack, it is afforded legal protections not available elsewhere." There are, however, two additional answers that merit consideration. Rarely are these fundamental truths about mass media paid much attention except in the halls of academia. Furthermore, they are frequently downplayed by journalists. They are, however, vital to the solidity of the Trinity.

The first truth, normally a given, is that media is a highly competitive big business. What is not so apparent is that newspapers survive or succumb by subscriptions and that radio/television programs serve at the pleasure of ratings (the number of people who listen to or watch a program). In most instances, media earnings and profit are directly related to high subscription rates or high ratings. In other words, it is the "people" who determine the type of news that is of interest. War, as an example, is normally a prime topic of interest.

As a result, despite the efforts of responsible journalists to control the situation, competition has been fierce over war

coverage. In its worst forms it takes the shape of "yellow journalism" or of U.S. troops being met by swarms of reporters with floodlights during their night landing in Somalia. At its best, unbridled competition presents the on-sight military commander with a veritable flood of "war" correspondents who will, given the resources of today's high-tech environment and transportation system, magically appear at the battle site and be dependent on the commander for protection and support.

Despite on-going efforts to form a "press pool" that works, competition by all "news" sources for equal access will be endemic among the press. A classic example is "the Mirabella problem."

[U]nder the rules of the [Desert Storm] pool system, the big newspapers could not get a second reporter into a combat pool until all other print organizations had been accommodated.... Jane DeLynn, the Mirabella reporter, [was able to access the battlefield in the interest of 'news' and] spent much of her time writing about the sex lives of female soldiers.<sup>10</sup>

The second truth is that news is inherently biased. This bias is best explained by the "Gatekeeper" theory of communication which basically states that in any news event there are multiple people ("gatekeepers") who have the power to influence the shape, or truth, of the event. Its application in a wartime environment is graphically portrayed in the evolution of a broadcast news story about Vietnam:

[Gatekeeper 1] Selection by news organization of where reporters will be assigned; limits which news stories will be capable of being covered, e.g. - no major newsmen assigned on regular status to Saigon in 1956.

[Gatekeeper 2] Selection by newsmaker of what he wishes to reveal to the newsman. (newsman's function: to minimize this stage of the encoding process.) e.g. - news blackouts for Vietnam war coverage.

[Gatekeeper 3] Selection by newsman [based on his own background and experience] of those aspects of the newsmaker's story which he, the newsman <u>feels</u> [emphasis added] should be reported, e.g. - reporting certain aspects of Vietnam war using certain reportage style while not reporting other sides of the news story or by devoting less time and resources to the reporting task.

[Gatekeeper 4] Possible censorship of news material by host government (in foreign news spots) [or, for purpose of this discussion, by the U.S. military].

[Gatekeeper 5] Bureaucratic, economic, aesthetic, and political gatekeeping of film to be used and therefore of future film to be desired, of story placement and airtime allocation, etc. - by staff members of central control sector of news organization, e.g. - film editors in news department like to show air footage of Vietnam river patrols (and consequently, newsmen in field shoot river patrol stories).11

It is important to note that two of the gatekeepers (#2 and #4) may be military personnel that range from the commanding officer to the private in the field. Bear in mind that part of the responsibility for the media response lies directly with the military gatekeepers. It is also important to note that the last "gatekeeper" includes the news editor. Early placement in the news

broadcast has proven to be significant in a story's ability to change attitudes.<sup>12</sup> Equally important is the fact that the last gatekeepers, who themselves have inherent biases, are frequently inundated with more information than they can use. In the production of nightly half-hour telecasts, for example, they are limited to approximately twenty minutes of "air time." The other ten minutes is used for commercials to generate revenue. In this way, additional bias is introduced by the very exclusion of information from the broadcast.

All this leads to the fog of war and friction both sen military and the media. With this background in mind, the media's influence on the Trinity and the military will be examined.

#### A NEW MODEL OF THE CLAUSEWITZIAN TRINITY

#### THE MODEL DEFINED

In Chapter 1, Section 28 of his book, On War, Carl Von Clausewitz sets forth precepts that define war as a "paradoxical" trinity and that "balance" must be maintained among each of three elements - the people, the military, and the government. If all three facets are not present in equal strength then support for war, "an instrument of policy," will be lost. As Clausewitz states: "Our task therefore is to develop a theory that maintains a balance between these three tendencies, like an object suspended between three magnets." 13

One representation of the Trinity is a two-dimensional, equilateral triangle (see Figure 1). At the top of the triangle is the government. In the subordinate positions, from left to right, are the military and the people. In the real scheme of things it is the duly elected government who represent (work for) the people and are empowered by the people to make war.

military is also answerable to the people but takes direction from the people's representative, the government. "The basic premise is that all three must exist, with generally equal force invested by each in the effort being undertaken (the war), in order that folly will be avoided."15

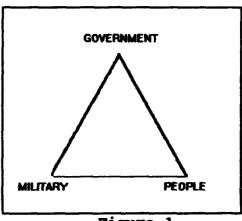


Figure 1

The fallacy in this representation of the Trinity is fourfold. First, the model is two-dimensional. It is incapable, therefore, of portraying the complexity of Clausewitz's proposition. Second, the structure as defined in the preceding paragraph suggests a linearity that is not intended. It could be argued that the people are at the top of the hierarchy, the government reports to the people, and the military reports directly to government. In truth, the actions of any one entity can have an impact on the others. Third, the structure undermines the intent of Clausewitz in placing the people first, the military second, and the government third. He was quite explicit when he wrote: "the first of these three

aspects mainly concerns the people; the second the commander and his army; the third the government."16 Finally, the Trinity does not exist in a vacuum. The influence of media plays a major role in maintaining or destabilizing its "balance."

It is also possible to argue that Clausewitz's structure, "like an object suspended between three magnets," can be taken literally.17 It is conceivable that at the time On War was written during the course of the early 1800's, Clausewitz was simply referring to something with which he was familiar - the unique properties of magnets.

A more plausible model (see Figure 2), that takes into full account the influence of media and the complexity of today's environment, is one of three-dimensions. First, there is a long

flat and narrow This surface. surface acts as an arbitrary plane designed to support the model as it moves with the passage of time. Second, a hollow,

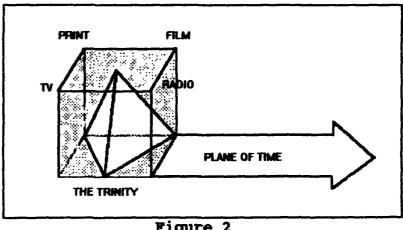


Figure 2

three-sided pyramid with flexible walls sits on the plane. The pyramid is symbolic of the Trinity. One side represents the people, the second side the military, and the third, the government. Superimposed over the pyramid is a pliant, water-filled cube. Each top corner of the cube represents a form of media (print, film, radio, and television) with the five exposed sides (one being the top) representative of their individual or collective influence. If only one form of media is exerting pressure, only one side of the cube will flex toward the pyramid. If two forms of media exert pressure, two sides of the cube will flex toward the pyramid. The same pattern holds true for three media. If, however, all media exert pressure, all five sides of the cube will flex toward the pyramid and the pyramid will be subject to total collapse. The plane of time provides a solid foundation, or base, for both the air-filled pyramid and water-filled cube.

The concept of operation is much like that of a submarine under water. The hollow pyramid (the submarine) has dynamic stability against the constant pressure of the water (the sea) contained in the cube. Due to its design the pyramid can resist modest changes in pressure (equal to diving to a greater depth) caused by the influence of one or more media. If, however, too much pressure is applied, one or more sides of the pyramid will flex inward, the pyramid will be weakened, and one or more sides may implode. In addition, not only can the sides of the cube (the media) exert pressure on the pyramid (the Trinity), but each side of the pyramid can exert pressure on the cube as well.

Given that one of the fundamental laws of physics states that for every action there is an opposite and equal reaction, a flex by the military side of the pyramid should cause a flex in the cube. The sides of the cube flexing outward equates to what will henceforth be referred to as the "negative pressure" of the media which causes all sides of the pyramid to be pulled outward toward the cube thereby reinforcing the stability of the Trinity. By the same token, the media itself can create a negative pressure external to the cube by prowar reporting. This could also cause the sides of the pyramid to flex outward. Outward flexing of the cube or the pyramid would solidify the Trinity.

Two familiar examples will be used to illustrate these points. For simplicity, the starting point for the model will be as illustrated in Figure 2 with the pyramid (the Trinity) fully erect inside the cube. In the latter stages of the war in Vietnam, the pyramid was subjected to extreme pressure by all media, the sides of the cube flexed inward, and the pyramid imploded. In Clausewitzian terminology, the balance of the Trinity was lost and, as a consequence, so was our nation's ability to wage war. On the other hand, in the first three days of military action during Operation JUST CAUSE (Panama 1989), the military and government walls of the pyramid flexed outward toward the sides of the cube as a result of military combat efficiency and strong, positive political rhetoric. Therefore, despite some complaints from the press, reporting was predominantly pro-conflict, the walls of the

cube were forced outward, and the pyramid remained fully erect. As Clausewitz would most likely state, the balance of the Trinity was complete and, therefore, the nation willing to engage in conflict.

It is important to note that, unless anarchy replaces democracy, the pyramid will never completely implode. The democratic process will keep the people and government sides of pyramid from total collapse and, the military's readiness to engage in combat will always keep its side of the pyramid partially erect. In short, while the model may change its shape over the course of events, e.g., pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict, it provides an indicator of the nation's willingness to engage in military conflict by forcing the observer to evaluate all parameters of the Trinity and the media. Furthermore, the flexibility provided by this model satisfies Clausewitz's statement that:

These three tendencies [people, military, and government] are like three different codes of law, deep-rooted in their subject and yet variable in their relationship to one another. [The flexible sides of the pyramid represent the codes of law. Their ability to flex under pressure represents the variable relationship to one another.] A theory that ignores any one of them or seeks to fix an arbitrary relationship between them would conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone it would be totally useless.<sup>20</sup>

#### THEORETICAL APPLICATION

In order to validate the appropriateness of this model a theoretical application is in order. Since the thesis for this presentation is military conflict, the model's projected use in determining the "balance" obtained during total war, limited war, and operations other than war will be hypothesized.

In total war, such as World War II, it can be assumed that each element of the pyramid is quite strong. The potential for the United States to become involved in total war, increases as a crisis develops that threatens the fundamental precepts of national security. The will of the people, government action, and military response are generally quite predictable. The response of the media is much less predictable as the news reporters' search for truth, competitiveness, and inevitable gatekeeper action will lead to some highly-visible dissenting views. If history is any example, however, the majority of the people will support the war effort over a considerable length of time. As a consequence, pressures applied to the model during total war would easily be absorbed by the resilient sides of the pyramid.

In a limited war, such as the Persian Gulf War, it could be assumed that one or more elements of the pyramid are not as strong as for total war. It may be, for example, that the threat to United States security and its need to become involved are not clear to the people but are clear to the government. In this case

the strength of the pyramid is not so predictable. In addition, the media are apt to cause uncertainty. Reporting of contradictory views or gatekeeper interpretation of events that have an impact on the strength of each element of the Trinity will be the order of the day. In this instance the pyramid may or may not be able to withstand the pressure. In any event, the pressures applied to the model during limited war would be quite heavy and would vacillate over time.

Given a general reluctance of the American people to engage in war, it can be assumed that one or more elements of the Trinity will be weak in support of the use of the military in operations other than war that are conflict-oriented. For example, United Nations peacekeeping actions may not elicit a strong sense of national need or urgency. The lack of understanding for such actions will cause stress on the model. Specifically, weakness in parts of the Trinity, the uncertainty and conflicting opinions of the media, and a general lack of understanding of the rationale behind operations other than war will be strong. As history suggests, the vacillating pressures applied to the model would make lengthy support of the people side of the pyramid doubtful due to the volatility, uncertainty, confusion, and ambiguity of developments without, in many instances, a clearly-defined end state. If the pressures were of equal force, however, a delicate balance could be maintained, and the model would retain its

original shape. If not, the pyramid would collapse and the operation other than war would not be supported.

If the above theories hold true, it should be possible to demonstrate why an event happened the way it did, determine if "corrections" could keep the Trinity in balance, and use the model to predict the fate of future events. In short, the model provides a unique way, albeit subjective, of examining war. Its real value, however, lies in causing the user to take a substantive look at all aspects of a potential military engagement.

#### THE MODEL APPLIED IN TOTAL WAR

World War II provides a good test of the model in total war. At the outset the pyramid was collapsed. With fresh memories of World War I, the "will" of the people was strongly against engagement in another conflict. While the government wanted to engage in war to help our allies, the American public did not. For many reasons ranging from a feeling that World War I was a "mistake" to recovery from the Great Depression, antiwar sentiment ran extremely high. These feelings were encouraged by aggressive opposition to war on the part of the media.

By closely examining the model, it is apparent that only a catastrophic event could cause a change since one whole side of the pyramid had collapsed. The people were not in support of the war. In fact, approximately 80% opposed U.S. involvement.<sup>21</sup> In addition,

the influential media gatekeepers kept a constant pressure on the pyramid so that it could not return to its original shape despite the efforts of the government. As one analyst noted in this regard, "a substantial segment of the press was bitterly opposed to U.S. involvement in the war and vigorously criticized any administration policies that appeared to make such involvement more likely."<sup>22</sup>

As the model slid along its plane of time, a catastrophic event occurred on 7 December 1941 - Japan declared war on the United States by violating American territory. In terms of the model, the pyramid regained its shape due to a change in the will of the people, and the simultaneous pro-war posture assumed by the gatekeepers flexed the walls of the cube outward. The model moved back into balance and held its shape for the duration of the war.

During World War II near real-time news was given to the American people via radio and newspapers. The gatekeepers were in full swing at home and abroad, censorship was in effect, and competition among reporters was at an all time high. It is important to note that a critical juncture was reached with regard to the media,

The armed forces of Britain and the United States made an effort to facilitate coverage of military action and released copious amounts of information about how the war was proceeding. However, there was a quid pro quo: reporters were expected to write positive, supportive stories that would reflect well on the performance of the military and the policies of the government.<sup>23</sup>

As a result the media and the military enjoyed a relationship that has been unparalled since. That relationship generated significant stability for the Trinity.

In this necessarily simplified rendition of World War II, the model appears to work well. At the end of the war the lack of one vital element, the will of the people, leads to the pyramid's collapse and the pressure of the media maintains that collapse. For the sake of argument, if the people had based their isolationism solely on a lack of information, could the model have been changed by a strong government? The shape of the model suggests not - unless the government could manipulate the media by persuading the gatekeepers to use their influence to "educate" the people toward the government's viewpoint. Today, as then, the government has leverage via use of the Presidential news conference and the broadcast of Congressional inquiries. Competition will mandate that most gatekeepers cover these events in case "new developments" emerge. However, the elimination of media pressure, in and of itself, does nothing toward the restoration of balance.

Returning to the original hypothesis for the model's behavior during total war, the projected observations hold true, as World War II demonstrated, only after war against the United States has been declared. Although beyond the scope of this work, the unexpected byproduct of the collapse of the model between wars

falls in line with this nation's history of inclination not to engage in war unless our national security is threatened.

#### THE MODEL APPLIED IN LIMITED WAR

The model is next tested against limited war by focusing on the Persian Gulf War. During that conflict, news was instantaneous, the gatekeepers were necessarily in full operation due to information overload, censorship was in effect, and competition among reporters, despite the development of the "press pool," was higher than it has ever been in history. While the public did not want to engage in war, it was convinced of the necessity of the Gulf war via the government's use of the media and the military's saturation of the media with information.

At the start of the build-up toward the Persian Gulf War, the pyramid was partially collapsed. The powerful memory of Vietnam lingered, but the situation in Iraq peeked the interest of the American people. Their strong preference was to avoid confrontation. However, the President [government] was paying attention to the will of the people:

[W]hen [President] Bush first announced hat he was sending troops to the Persian Gulf, he gave as a key reason U.S. desire to preserve access to Middle East oil. But when public-opinion polls [taken nearly 'minute-by-minute"] revealed that the American people opposed going to war over cheap oil, Bush switched gears and said his policy was aimed at stopping Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein from building an atomic bomb—a policy that polls showed the public supported.<sup>24</sup>

In terms of the model, the government side of the pyramid was used to manipulate the people side of the pyramid by flexing outward toward the walls of the cube to influence the media. As a consequence, the pyramid, true to form, returned to its original shape as the media in "reporting the news" conveyed the government's message to the public. By so doing, the walls of the cube had been pushed outward by the pyramid, thereby strengthening the pyramid and the model as a whole.

For their part the gatekeepers faced a conundrum. "Everything that was known about Operation Desert Storm had been determined before and after by the military." In addition, the reporters duped themselves: "This [military control] was forgotten by many newscasters in the heat of battle. They fell under the spell of Cable News Network (CNN) and video clips from the Pentagon." Complicate matters the media, especially CNN, was already present by the time war arrived. The influence of the media, orchestrated by the military, reached a record high. With the desires of the government and the military being shown by the media and the interest of the people in the "live action" pictures from Saudi Arabia and Baghdad, the model had become as stable as it had been during total war.

The model, however, was soon stressed in multiple ways when the allies stopped at the Iraqi border. The press, Congress, and the people began to question why the policy makers had let Saddam escape. True to form, as the walls of the pyramid flexed inward and increased their pull against the walls of the cube, the pyramid collapsed.

In reviewing the hypothesis, these results were anticipated. First, the President (government) sought to build a case for war in a manner that was politically astute but, lacked enduring qualities. Second, reporting of a variety of views by the press in Saudi Arabia caused confusion that had an impact on the will of both the American people and Congress. Examples of this are: the (expounding the military view of the war and/or press pool conducting interviews only under the scrutiny of the military27); CNN in Baghdad (under Iragi censorship); reporters who had made independent arrangements to go where they pleased (under no one's censorship); and, the convoluted newscasts by Saddam Hussein. And, finally, the perception of an unsatisfactory end to the war by the people, Congress, and some members of the military made the collapse of the pyramid inevitable. Therefore, the model holds true in limited war.

#### THE MODEL APPLIED TO OPERATIONS OTHER THAN WAR

The last application of the model is against operations other than war (OOTW) where it is predicted to be weakest.

The Army classifies its activities during peacetime and conflict as operations other than war. During peacetime, the US attempts to influence world events through those actions that routinely occur between nations. Conflict is characterized by hostilities to secure strategic objectives.<sup>26</sup>

The most commonly recognized forms of OOTW are U.S. military support to United Nations peacekeeping and peace enforcement efforts. However, OOTW activities also include strikes and raids, support to insurgency, antiterrorist operations, counterdrug operations, humanitarian relief, and the evacuation of U.S. citizens from hostile environments.

OOTW represent a gray area. The people, the government, the military, and the media are often uncertain about why the United States should be involved. Frequently, these activities do not represent a direct or immediate threat to the well-being of America. Amidst this uncertainty the model is subject to a bombardment of vacillating changes among the three elements of the pyramid and the gatekeeping operations of the media.

The crisis in Bosnia provides a prime example of how the model operates in an environment of peacekeeping and peace enforcement. Regular and instantaneous news reports have bombarded the people, the government, and the military since the beginning of the crisis. Yet reports of atrocities, almost constant military conflict, and the threatened obliteration of one culture by another has failed to elicit more than passing interest. While some media stories suggest the U.S. should get involved, others do not. The military stands ready to do what the government wants. The government is ensconced in international politics of "leading the way" toward humanitarian relief and world peace. And the people in Kansas

could not care less as long as the U.S. does not have to send troops and they do not have to pay more taxes. The media, however, keeps the issue alive by constantly exposing the American public to the crisis. Remember, war sells.

Given all this, the pyramid is partially collapsed and the conflicting influences on the cube will not allow the pyramid to restore without the interjection of a new, major development that threatens U.S. vital interests. Accordingly, the government is limited in what it can do, e.g., the threat of air strikes against the aggressors in Sarajevo and Gorazde. Under these circumstances it is almost impossible for the pyramid not to collapse totally; consequently, the model suggests that support for military intervention in Bosnia does not exist.

There are, however, examples where the opposite is true. One such operation is military assistance in the war on drugs. Here, the pyramid has been moderately strong over an extended period of time. Why the difference? Using the model as a guide, the reason becomes straight forward. First, illicit drugs are a threat to the well-being of the country and, while the means to control them are debatable, the overall notion of drug control is a fundamental desire of the people. Second, the government is directly involved and demonstrates its support by continuing to fund the military operation. Third, despite some institutional reluctance, the military sees itself in an interdiction role against supply as

preserving the well-being of the United States. And, lastly, the media continues to give its support, despite occasional stories to the contrary, by graphically reporting on the social ills caused by drugs. In this instance the model holds and "war" is supported.

The model clearly points toward weaknesses in the fundamental philosophy of operations other than war. The inherent weaknesses in the elements of the Trinity and the vacillation of the media in these types of operations make the pyramid extraordinarily Considering that the pyramid is fully or partially vulnerable. collapsed between conflicts, its reconstruction is tenuous at best. But even this condition is not a given since history has demonstrated that multiple operations other than war may occur simultaneously. In that case the actions of the media will have a strong influence upon the length of U.S. involvement in any particular operation due to the focus and relative emphasis of reporting on the various operations. Continued military involvement in antidrug activities in South America and the withdrawal of troops from Somalia despite U.N. protests support this hypothesis. It is important to note, however, that a direct threat has the power to bring the model into balance while the ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding most operations other than war may not. At best the pyramid is minimally supported and on the verge of collapse in operations other than war.

#### THE MODEL APPLIED TO A WAR OF THE FUTURE

The use of the model for future events is conceivable. In light of what is already known about the shape of the model under hypothetical and real conditions, it should be possible to predict the outcome of future scenarios by close examination of each aspect of the model at several points along the plane of time. By way of example, the global flashpoint of North Korea will be used. Since the model is used as a measure of our nation's willingness to wage war, only scenarios that have a potential for conflict will be examined. Furthermore, the model will start from a position of pyramidal collapse since sentiment still runs high against shedding American blood. The date is 24 November 1994, Thanksgiving Day, 0500 Daylight Savings Time.

Scenario \$1: North Korea launches a preemptive strike against South Korea with conventional weapons. The attack is a surprise and Seoul is overrun, pushing our troops to the Southern part of the peninsula. U.S. casualties are high. Reinforcements have been sent from Japan in order to help with a "holding action" until help can arrive. It is evident that the North Koreans intend to establish their forward lines as far south as possible before winter. The President has declared that the U.S. is obligated by security agreement to render military assistance to South Korea, placed U.S. troops on alert, and sent additional naval forces to the area for immediate support. Congress is in emergency session to decide whether or not to declare war. Political rhetoric has

begun. The U.N. Security Council has been called to emergency session. And the unbridled media is having a field day. Reports of the sights, sounds, and tragedy of war are sent back "live" via satellite. With an almost twelve-hour time delay, the gatekeepers are sorting through information overload for the "exclusives" that will produce the highest ratings. They know the American public is fascinated with war, especially if American lives are at stake. Most American families go on with their Thanksgiving Day plans, but the mood of this holiday has been violently altered.

Day One: Government and military actions since 0500 have commenced per terms of the bilateral security agreement with South Korea. As awareness grows, public reaction is first of shock and then desire for some form of resolution. An examination of the model shows that the pyramid is stable, for now. The walls of the cube are subject to pressure since media interest, activities, and influence are extremely high. Sensitized by media influence, the people side of the pyramid flexes almost to restoration. day progresses, people have time to think. Some, remembering Vietnam and Somalia, want to get our troops out with all due speed and at whatever cost required. But the majority sees this as an attack on American troops and wants to fight back. The government side of the pyramid has also been restored. The President as Commander-in-Chief has begun a move toward war, but Congress is in heated debate. The active military is on alert and, in response to Presidential authorization, the Reserves and National Guard are

beginning to mobilize on a selected basis. As a consequence, the military side of the pyramid is as restored as it can be, constrained only by the weight of the people and the government. Meanwhile, the media has begun "man-on-the-street" interviews with John Q. Citizen, members of Congress, the White House, and "views" from abroad. The first of many public opinion polls are televised.

Day One+: Pro-war sentiment by the media continues to strengthen the pyramid. The situation is growing worse and the news coverage is continuous and detailed. The people respond to the polls and the government: If the government says we must go to war solely to honor a security agreement, the pyramid collapses the people do not see the value in additional casualties for an area of the world whose strategic importance they do not fully comprehend. Besides, wars in that region seem to be never-ending. Therefore, the U.S. would be forced to disengage as the pyramid collapses. If, on the other hand, using pre-Desert Storm polls as the most recent indicator of the conditions under which the people are willing to wage war, 30 the government uses the media to persuade the people that the nation must go to war to stop a nuclear threat and that rescue of our troops that are engaged in battle is not feasible without full-scale intervention of limited duration, then the people will most likely agree to, if not call for, military engagement. As the government, the people, and the military are committed to war, the pyramid is fully restored.

Day One++: This engagement, unlike Desert Storm, has many casualties. As mounting casualties and the horrors of war are reported "live" by the media, an inward pressure is exerted on all sides of the cube. As a result, the sides of the pyramid flex inward. The government attempts, via the media, to maintain public support for armed intervention. Because of a weakening of the will of the people, that side of the pyramid also weakens. Military officials and war correspondents disagree over censorship. military is concerned about the safety of the reporters and the sensitivity of the information reported. The correspondents are concerned about telling a story. If censorship is adopted, additional pressure is applied to the military side of the pyramid by a disgruntled press whose gatekeepers would most likely make public their objections. These gatekeeper editorial "sidebars" take away time allotted to war news. If a policy of openness is adopted, pressure from the media will likely be balanced as the combination of positive stories and a potentially placated press will offset any negative stories. In either event, the military side of the pyramid will become the more stable than the other two In spite of the military/media balance, people will begin to have doubts. Not with regard to the military's unquestioned ability to wage war, but about humanitarian concern over the cost of war. The people side of the pyramid weakens. At that time, the nation's ability to continue war is at risk and will require constant reinforcement by the government. Given the dynamics of

the model, the government is destined to lose unless it invokes martial law and manipulates the news that the people receive.

Day One+++: Due to either prolonged hostilities (the costs are not worth continuing) or to victory, the pyramid will once again collapse.

Scenario 2: North Korea launches a preemptive, albeit limited, nuclear strike against South Korea (low yield, tactical weapons purchased from Russian Army unit commanders who are trying to raise money to feed their troops). Most of the U.S. forces in South Korea are vaporized along with portions of Seoul, Pusan, Osan, and other strategic targets. With their two to one manpower advantage31 increased by this devastation, North Korean ground troops are advancing swiftly against limited opposition and are expected to overrun the South in less than one month. U.S. reinforcements have been sent to the southern tip of Korea to assist in a "holding action" until help can arrive. Political rhetoric has reached volatile levels as China, Russia, the United States and others go on full conventional and nuclear alert. The President and World Leaders have declared outrage at the use of nuclear weapons. U.N. Security Council votes for immediate action to stop the aggression by any means necessary short of high yield ICBM's -Concurrently, Congress declares war and the China abstains. President calls for full mobilization in support of our bilateral agreement with South Korea. An irate media (most of their

reporters on the peninsula were in Seoul) send sketchy and jaded reports of the conditions. However, CNN and others immediately send reinforcements to the theater of war via all possible means.

Day One: The walls of the cube are subject to an outward pressure by the media as news of the attack spreads. This pressure is heightened by a lack of "live" television coverage and subsequent fear of the unknown. Due to the almost immediate response by the government and the military coupled with the peoples' instinct about the inherent dangers of nuclear war, the pyramid restores to its original shape from its between conflict position of partial collapse.

Day One+: With events unfolding via the media and concomitant use of the media by the government, an outward pressure is maintained by the cube and the pyramid remains standing. The people at this point have increased concerns: is the United States headed for another world war, will United States territories be threatened by fallout, and how quickly can the enemy be defeated? The collective effect of these concerns is to keep the model solid both internally and externally.

Day One++: The North baits the U.N. forces in South Korea with the threat of using more nuclear weapons. As more reinforcements arrive, the South makes slow but steady progress toward the North. Media reports are at an all time high. Damage

and casualties are severe due to intense attacks by an enemy ground force of approximately 750,000 soldiers. As U.S. casualties mount, pressure on the top of the model is still slightly negative since the threat of nuclear weapons is still present. In addition, the emotional influence of the people and the media will flex the sides of the pyramid and cube further outward in a quest for aggressive action, to include the use of low yield nuclear weapons against the North. The U.S. government reacts with caution for fear of starting a nuclear conflagration. Hence, its side of the pyramid will flex inward which will, in turn, dampen the overall influence of the media and the people. The military side of the pyramid remains fully erect. The pyramid, although distorted by the changing relationship between the government and the people remains intact.

Day One+++: Due to the superior forces of the U.N. the North is defeated. The nuclear threat is averted as North Korea's nuclear capability has either been expended or captured by U.N. forces. The pyramid collapses. Aftermath reports, editorials, commentaries, and Congressional Hearings, will be sustained by the media and will keep an inward pressure on the cube. Accordingly, the model suggests that the nation's willingness to engage in further military conflict will be greatly diminished.

Scenario #3: The government in North Korea collapses. The military tries to seize control, civil war erupts and millions of

North Koreans head toward the South for refuge. The U.S. military is placed on alert. The North Korean military massed near the DMZ open fire on the refugees still believing that affairs of the North are "internal matters" that should be dealt with accordingly. The South attacks the North to "protect" family members who live in the North. Although, facing nearly two to one odds, the South forces an opening in the North Korean lines that acts as a funnel for the refugees. Knowing it cannot hold out long, the South asks for assistance under the terms of its bilateral security agreement with the United States - "after all it was the North who attacked the South by shooting relatives, not the other way around." forces in South Korea hold their positions as the ROK Army fights its way north. A few American casualties are noted along the DMZ. These are incidental to the attack on the North. The U.S. forces in Japan remain in Japan. The U.N. takes the issue under advisement. The media are censored by the ROK Army but are allowed to interview casualties and "relatives" who make it safely to the South.

Day One: From its previous state of pre-war collapse, pressure is placed on the sides of the cube due to intensive coverage by the media. The President sees an opportunity to eliminate a nuclear threat and suggests that the request for assistance should be granted. Congress debates the issue. The American people respond with some interest, especially with the possibility of increased U.S. involvement. Divergent information

and opinions, keep the public from exerting a focused pressure. In addition, the question remains open as to the true nuclear capability of the North. The U.S. military has been placed on alert. The sides of the pyramid flex slightly. Full reconstitution of the pyramid, however, is prevented by the uncertainty of the public and the government.

Day One+: As reporters move closer to the front and witness actual fighting, the human cost of this confrontation becomes apparent. The government is still vacillating. There is little danger to U.S. troops unless the South loses ground. Internal and external influences are not sufficient to cause the model to change.

Day One++: While the world debates, the South Koreans pull back due to a high rate of attrition. The U.S. Government has not effectively used the media to change the will of the people. The government's own "will" has not galvanized and there is a heated debate between the President and the Congress. There has been no single aggressor like Saddam Hussein, there has been no imminent danger of a nuclear explosion, and there is a widely held perception that the South, not the North, made the attack. The U.S. military awaits further orders. The media keeps up a constant barrage of information; but with so many factors in play, the gatekeepers have not focused on American involvement or casualties.

The pyramid collapses due to the weakness of the sides that represent the people and the government.

In each of these scenarios the military is in a state of readiness in its mission to serve the people and, therefore, can be considered the strongest element of the Trinity. Its side of the pyramid is always partially, if not completely, restored. The "will" of the people and the government are a different story. a utopian environment they would be identical. In the reality of today's world, however, they are often variable in their relationship to one another. Therefore, their sides of the pyramid are constantly flexing and, when it comes to the proposition of waging war, may or may not totally collapse. The greatest influence on all of the above is the media. As the model readily illustrates, the impact of the media is pervasive throughout the Trinity.

## CONSTRUCT FOR THE FUTURE

Based on the preceding information, it is evident that media coverage of the military has a direct impact on the government and the people. By the same token the treatment of the media by the military influences the types of news stories presented to the government and the people as illustrated by the Desert Storm Press Pool. It is clear from the model that the media nurtures this

symbiotic relationship. Therefore, a look at the model for practical applications between the military and the media during times of conflict is warranted.

In the early sections of this paper, it was noted that the press wanted to give the "whole truth" to the "folks back home" while the military wanted to "protect sensitive information" from being disclosed to the enemy. The model suggests that an inherent tug-of-war results. When the media is able to convey the whole truth, the cube tends to flex outward which, in turn, causes the sides of the pyramid to flex outward. When the military tries to protect sensitive information (usually via censorship or limited access), it strains the relationship by trying, in effect, to flex its side of the pyramid inward which pulls against the walls of the cube.

Pragmatism suggests that the Marine Corps philosophy comes closest to achieving the balance illustrated by the fully erect model.

The philosophy of the Marine Corps public affairs programs is quite simple—to ensure that the American people know the truth about the Corps. The public affairs mission is to provide timely, accurate information on Marine Corps missions, organizations, and performance as instruments of national policy and security.<sup>32</sup>

It was a philosophy that appeared to have worked in the Gulf where, in the words of one analyst, "it appeared to the public that they [the Marine Corps] won the ground war single handedly." In practice, the Marine Corps acknowledged the needs of a high-tech press for "fast, effective news-gathering" and gave them almost unrestricted access. As in World War II, the required secrecy was handled smoothly, politely, and in a positive manner. The result was that many of the local interest stories, troop interviews, and "action shots" were of Marines. The Marine Corps way keeps the model, and, therefore, the Trinity, in balance.

The principal recommendation of this paper is for all military services to examine their relationship with the media in terms of the model. The Marine Corps way is but one of many possibilities and for now appears to have met with the most success. Each service, however, has its own culture, and the development of their relationship with the media must be unique. This model coupled with the insights into media operations provided throughout this paper provide one additional tool for use in making certain that all parameters necessary for balance are considered.

## CONCLUSION

The reasons behind the long term friction between the military and the media have been examined. Advances in technology were shown to be a catalyst in intensifying the level of friction. The media were shown to have an inherent bias and competitive nature that affected their objectivity. The media were also shown to be aggressive in their pursuit of presenting the "truth" to people, and, in so doing, had direct impact on the Trinity. The military was shown to be overly protective in its desire to maintain secrecy and not to have to suffer reporters at the battle front. But, it was also demonstrated in both reality and theory that the media can be supportive of the military mission.

The new model illustrates that Clausewitz's Trinity is best demonstrated via a three-dimensional representation that takes into account the significant influence of the media. This model was subjectively tested against theoretical expectations of limited war, total war, and operations other than war. It held true. The model was then subjected to application against historical events such as World War II and Bosnia. Again it held true. Additionally, the model was applied to three future scenarios. While the validity of the latter may only be proven over time, an examination of the model against the scenarios led to robust conclusions for each.

The development of this model provides a tool for the examination of both past and future military conflicts. By application of known and projected parameters against the model, it is possible to examine the balance of the Trinity and, subsequently, the nation's willingness to engage in military conflict.

In addition, this model was used to examine briefly how the military could improve it relationship with the media. The model suggested that ways can be found to ease that relationship. Since examination of each service's public affairs/media policies are beyond the scope of this paper, it is suggested that each service examine its current and/or planned philosophy against this model.

In conclusion, Clausewitz's thoughts are very much alive and well. All that needs to be done is to examine them in new ways. Clausewitz has offered more to the advancement of military/media relationships than even he could have imagined. His vision of the Trinity, examined under the influence of media in the form of a three-dimensional model, has spawned a new tool for the examination of war.

## **ENDNOTES**

The best concise source for examples of this adversarial relationship over the years is Loren B. Thompson's <u>Defense Beat:</u> The <u>Dilemmas of Defense Coverage</u>, (New York: Lexington Books, 1991). The most comprehensive source, albeit limited to radio and television broadcasting, is Eric Barnouw's trilogy entitled <u>A History of Broadcasting in the United States</u>: Vol. I, <u>A Tower in Babel</u>, to 1933; Vol. II, <u>The Golden Web</u>, 1933-1953; and, Vol. III, <u>The Image Empire</u>, from 1953, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

Original emphasis. Harry F. Noyes, III, Maj., USAR, "Like It or Not, The Armed Forces Need the Media," ARMY 42 (June 1992), 33.

References to Clausewitz by the press were scant. In fact only three were found in the process of developing this paper. One, however, was particularly refreshing. In speaking to the preparations for the Gulf War, Lance Morrow, a correspondent for <u>Time Magazine</u>, wrote in "A Long Hallucination of War," <u>Time</u>, 10 December 1993, 43:

War, as the military theorist Karl von Clausewitz said, depends to a large extent upon imponderables, including the enormous, unpredictable force of public opinion. One of the profound lessons of Vietnam is that no President can fight a war (except the quick Grenada-Panama kind) without the full backing of the American people.

\*Loren B. Thompson, <u>Defense Beat</u>, (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), 3.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 3.

'Andrews, 80.

7Ibid., 78.

Thompson, 12.

Peter Andrews, "Press Versus the Military: The War That Never Ends," American Heritage, July-August 1991, 80.

<sup>10</sup>Howard Kurtz, <u>Media Circus</u>, (New York: Times Books, 1993), 219. <sup>11</sup>Robert S. Frank, <u>Message Dimensions of Television News</u>, (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1973), 5.

12Frank, 68.

<sup>13</sup>Carl von Clausewitz, <u>On War</u>, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 89.

14The two dimensional model of the Clausewitzian Trinity is presented by Dr. David Jablonsky, Why Is Strategy Difficult?, Professional Readings in Military Strategy, No. 4, (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania:1992), 9. In addition, this model is used by military professors in the instruction of graduate-level strategy at the U.S. Army War College seminars.

<sup>15</sup>LTC Theodore G. Chopin, USA, "The Remarkable Trinity: Another Dimension," (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: 1993), 3.

16 Emphasis added. Clausewitz, 89.

17Chopin, 5-7

destroyed the Presidency while in the Iran Contra Affairs it protected the Congress from subversion of its will by the President and prevented the National Security Council from becoming a rogue government. For those interested in detailed analyses of the impact of these affairs, the following are recommended: Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward's All the President's Men, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974) and Theodore Draper's A Very Thin Line: The Iran Contra Affairs, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1991).

but remains in a constant state of preparedness to defend our country. This precept is best exemplified by a U.S. Army War College slogan adopted from the writings of its founder, Secretary of War Elihu Root: "Not to promote war, but to preserve peace by intelligent and adequate preparation to repel aggression." This slogan is emblazoned on the wall, incorporated in curriculum pamphlets and seminar discussions, and presented in class lectures as a constant reminder of the military's mission.

<sup>20</sup>Clausewitz, 89.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Thompson, 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>24</sup>Steve Manning, "The People's Voice: U.S. President's Now Need to Take Public Opinion into Account before Waging War," Scholastic Update, 8 February 1991, 20.

\*Reporters in the Gulf Rally 'Round the Flag: A Victory for the Censors, a Danger to Democracy, "World Press Review, April 1991, 24.

26 Ibid., 24.

<sup>27</sup>The apparent exception was the United States Marines who permitted almost unrestricted access by the correspondents and, in return, received very favorable coverage. The <u>Marine Corps Gazette</u>, October 1992 has several articles that cover this subject.

<sup>26</sup>Original emphasis, US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 100-5, <u>Operations</u> (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1993), 2-0.

<sup>29</sup>A relatively quick and comprehensive overview of the Korean situation may be obtained by reading the following:

- Delfs, Robert ed. "Asia 1994 Yearbook." <u>Far Eastern</u>
  <u>Economic Review</u>, December 1993, 148-154 & 233-234.
- Gong, Gerrit W., Seizaburo Sato, and Tae Kwon Ok, eds.

  Korean Peninsula Developments and U.S.-Japan-South
  Korea Relations. Vol. I. Washington, D.C.: The
  Center for Strategic and International Studies,
  1993.
- Jordan, Amos A., ed. <u>Korean Unification: Implications</u>
  <u>for Northeast Asia</u>. Vol. 15, No. 7, <u>Significant</u>
  <u>Issues Series</u>, by the Center for Strategic and
  International Studies. Washington, D.C.: The
  Center for Strategic and International Studies,
  1993.

30Manning, 20.

\*\*Robert Delfs, ed., "Asia 1994 Yearbook," <u>Far Eastern</u>
<u>Economic Review</u>, December 1993, 233-234. This reference states that there are 1.127 million active military personnel in North Korea and 633 thousand in South Korea. In addition, North Korea has 6.540 million reserves, while South Korea has only 4.5 million.

<sup>32</sup>David C. Hague, Col., USMC, "The News Media--More Friend than Foe to the Military," <u>Marine Corps Gazette</u>, October 1992, 26.

33Randall L. Pingley, LTC, USA, "Military/Media Relationship in Future Conflict," USAWC Military Studies Program Paper, (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College, Spring 1993), 7.

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